Curiosity, driving trucks,

Tucked away in an old-fashioned five-storey brick building near Toronto's iconic Honest Ed's Warehouse is the most daring video-based news service in Canada. The Real News occupies 7,000 square feet of the funky aging edifice, housing an up-to-the-minute HDTV (high definition) studio, including three HD cameras, editing stations and digital camera switchers within its confines. On the roof are four satellites, one of which feeds breaking news from Associated Press Television Network (APTN), while the others bring in news broadcasts from hundreds of TV stations around the world.

The Real News is the product of visionary media-maker, Paul Jay. He founded the station with a fundamental goal: to create uncompromising global news, funded primarily by viewers. Refusing government grants, corporate support, and advertising, the news service is beholden to no one except its investors, the public. A genuinely democratic service, it will employ seasoned journalists in countries around the world to report the stories that are breaking in their region. Poised to fill a huge gap in the media landscape, The Real News will begin to disseminate on the Internet this fall with plans to ally with conventional broadcasters next year. Check *www.therealnews.com* for details.

Paul Jay with the crew for The Real News.

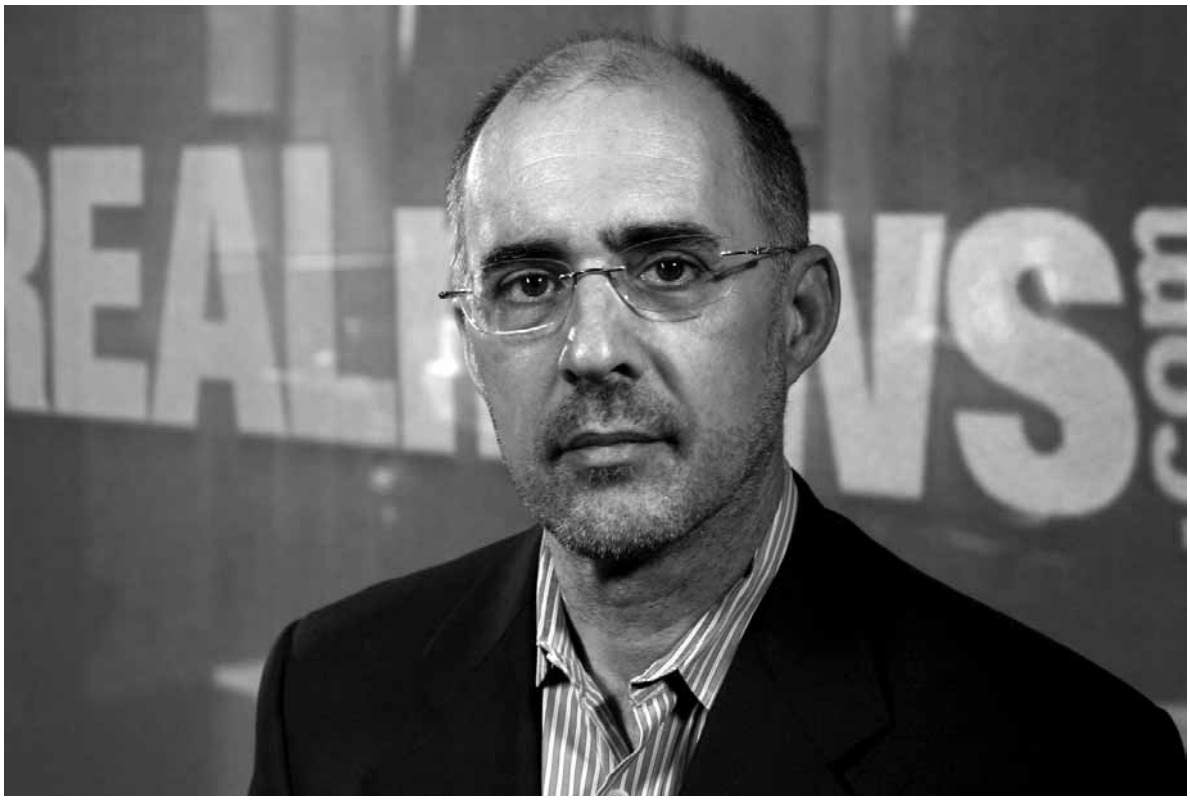
The Real News is just the latest project for Paul Jay, who has been a force in the Canadian media for a quarter of a century. Twice a Gemini Award-winning documentarian, for *Hitman Hart: Wrestling with Shadows* (1998) and *Return to Kandahar* (2003), Jay's doc-directing credits include *Lost in Las Vegas* (2001), *The Never-Endum-Referendum* (1997) and *The Birth of Language* (1986). Not content with only directing documentaries, Jay co-created and produced *Face Off* (1994-1998) and *counterSpin* (1998-2004), two acclaimed CBC Newsworld talk shows that debated central political issues of the day, bringing left and right wing perspectives to the front of political discourse in Canada.

Another signal achievement for Paul Jay was the founding of Hot Docs, a Toronto festival, which has grown to international prominence in less than 15 years. Activist, artist and impresario: Paul Jay has created an impressive and diverse body of work. POV interviewed him at The Real News studio about a career that should be reaching new heights in the coming years.

and a dash of Roland Barthes:

Lessons in the games of truth and dynamic television

A POV Interview with Paul Jay



Paul Jay

PJ: Paul Jay
POV: Barri Cohen & Marc Glassman

POV: How did you start your film career?
PJ: I've never thought of what I do as a career. Maybe from the outside it looks like a career, but it was mostly a series of accidents. I didn't get any formal training. I didn't go to film school. I worked at the post office and fixed railroad cars.

Mostly I've been driven by what I thought was the most meaningful thing I could do. Somewhere along the line, I realized doing what was most meaningful made me happier, and doing things that weren't meaningful, either for career or money, didn't make me happy. I was lucky to realize that early in my life.

I've primarily been driven by my own curiosity. I found there was no better school than filmmaking. I got to make a couple of films about a wrestling family (*Hitman Hart*, 1998; *Life and Death of Owen Hart*, 1999), a film about Las Vegas (*Lost in Las Vegas*, 2001), a film about language (*The Birth of Language*, 1986), a film about Albania (*Albanian Journey*, 1991), a film about cowboys in Alberta (*Here's to the Cowboy*, 1982), a film about Quebec (*Never-Endum-Referendum*, 1997), and one about Afghanistan (*Return to Kandahar*, 2003): there is no better way to explore the world than documentary filmmaking. You get access to people who, under any other circumstance, wouldn't spend five minutes with you.
POV: When did the filmmaking bug first get to you?

PJ: I quit high school when I was 16 but my mother talked me into going to an experimental free-school called Everdale, near Guelph. I didn't go to class much but someone donated a camera and 16mm film, and the teachers asked, 'Does anyone want to make a film?' I put my hand up. I wasn't doing anything else. So I made a little film about a kid who grows up in a big rich household, sheds all his clothing and falls in love and fights a monster…it was silly! I just wanted to figure out how to make a film.
POV: Was it your story?
PJ: No, I wasn't from a rich family.
POV: But shedding your skin and becoming yourself: was that you?
PJ: Yeah, but not just me; that was the story of the '60s. My family was political. My father had been a union organizer but later he got disillusioned and became a small businessman. My mother is 85 and she's still an activist.

Anyway, after I finished the year at Everdale…I went to Berkeley and LA. It was 1969 and the Vietnam War and the bombings of Cambodia were happening. When I came back to Toronto, I was supposed to go to the London School of Film Technique towards the end of '70 but that fall, Trudeau declared the War Measures Act. So, now my country had martial law and I was supposed to leave to go to film school. It was a choice: did I want to have a career as a film director or do something meaningful? I couldn't see how I would make meaningful films if I left my country at such a time, so I didn't go.

I needed a job so I wound up driving a truck for the post office for three years and fixing freight cars on the railroad for another five years. I edited the union newsletter and became a political activist involved in the anti-war movement. After all that, I still had the filmmaking bug and decided that I wanted to get back to filmmaking. So I got a job as a camera assistant on feature films, and trained as a focus puller for a couple of years. I watched the directors and thought, 'I could do that.'

So I started doing a few industrials and—this is what I mean by my career being a series of accidents—I read an article in a newspaper, about something called the *Toronto Supercross*. It involved motorbike jumping inside the CNE (Canadian National Exhibition) stadium. I phoned the organizers up and asked, 'Can I have the rights to your event for next year? For a dollar?' And they said, 'CTV has the rights.' I asked, 'Do you have a contract with them?' And they said, 'No, they did it last year and we assume they'll do it next year.' I said, 'Give me the rights for 30 days for $1, and I'll make a real film about this, not just watch your bikes go around in circles.'

They were too inexperienced to realize how silly it was what I was proposing… [When CTV didn't make me a good offer to keep *Supercross*, I went to] Jim Thompson at CBC Sports Weekend, who got excited and gave me 10 grand. Then I got 10 grand from Yamaha and 10 grand from Bel-Ray Oil and pieced together this tiny budget. I just wanted to learn how to make films. But it was funny, the very first shoot, we had nine cameras. We got all our buddies from the feature film business to help so the whole thing was shot in 16mm. I wound up making seven or eight films for Sports Weekend after that [including *The Supercross Spectacular*, 1981 and *The Schooner Grand Prix*, 1982].

That phase ended with *Here's to the Cowboy*, which is my first real film, about small town rodeo life in Alberta. We went all over southern Alberta and shot a bit of the Calgary Stampede. We won an award at the Chicago Film Festival. Next was an anthropology film called *The Birth of Language*. It wound up selling to a lot of different places, but it started as a TVO project.
POV: How did *The Birth of Language* happen?
PJ: I saw Koko the Gorilla on the cover of *National Geographic*, became curious, and phoned the woman who was training Koko on how to communicate through sign language. I asked if there was anybody doing a film on him and she said, 'Not right now, are you interested?' I said 'Yes,' so I flew down and met Koko.

The main thing that struck me was not how wonderful Koko was, but how powerful human culture is that it can even impart language to an animal that wouldn't naturally develop it. I went down to find out about gorillas and sign language, but the real question that emerged for me was, 'How do humans develop articulate speech?' That led to an exploration of abstract thought and language. It was like taking an anthropology course.

Making documentaries gives you access to people you couldn't talk to otherwise. I interviewed the leading scientist working on language and the development of the brain; the foremost scientist working on how the movement of the larynx gave us language and the top person on the role of tool making. Someone recommended that I read Frederick Engels' article on the role of labour and the transition from ape to man. It was so brilliant that it became the thesis for the film.
POV: Your work is so diverse—from motorcycles to gorillas to Hot Docs. How do you conceptualize projects?
PJ: Usually, if I can see it, I can do it. Hot Docs (for which I was founding Chair in 1992) was like that. It was hard for my CIFC colleagues to see it [the Canadian Independent Film Caucus, now the Documentary Organisation of Canada]. To them, a festival of documentaries seemed like a diversion from the CIFC lobbying work. I was chair of CIFC at the time. People thought it would be a drain on the organization and not really generate revenue. I understand why they thought that; it easily could have been a big idea that wouldn't go anywhere. But I could visualize that it would work and make money for the Caucus.
POV: This was actually a debate at the Caucus?
PJ: In 1993, we had a meeting of the executive. We proposed doing the festival and everybody voted no. I lost. There was only one vote for it—mine. I called Debbie Nightingale [who was then producing the Trade Forum at the Festival of Festivals, now the Toronto International Film Festival] and Debbie said she'd work on spec. It was because of her involvement, on spec, that the festival flew. Debbie and I raised money, and the festival was a hit. Without Debbie there wouldn't be a Hot Docs. Once people could see it was real, the CIFC [DOC] got excited about the project and everyone pitched in, so Hot Docs really was founded by the CIFC.
POV: It was very cheap that first year.
PJ: Relatively speaking, but it was a good event. We were on the Danforth; we had a big dinner—it was a huge hit. The awards we gave were very meaningful. And look what's happened to it since! It's the largest, most important doc festival in North America.
POV: Is there a process you go through to figure out whether a project will be worthwhile or not?
PJ: The process is somewhat bewildering to me. I think I have a nose for a

Mining protest in Guatemala, The Real News

Gore Vidal for The Real News

good story, I know one when I see it. But the projects seem to emerge, almost by chance. The Vegas film came from hearing a radio commercial while sitting in the dentist's chair. With, *Hitman Hart*, I was flipping TV channels one night. Now, I couldn't care less about pro wrestling, but I just happened to click on an interview with Bret Hart who was announcing his 'retirement.' I could see he was a great character, and in the back of my mind I was thinking, 'Isn't this guy Canadian? How come this Canadian, who is maybe the biggest wrestling star in the world, hasn't been featured in a film?' [At the time, he was the World Wrestling Foundation (WWF) champ.] When you're making films here, you're always looking for Canadian stories that have world appeal, to a large extent because you can finance it.

This is a film I got into *without* seeing it. I just knew that there were enough elements there that something *had* to work…the wacky family, the behind-the-scenes of wrestling. I knew I wanted to do a film about something in the popular culture, and use it as a metaphor for something more. What finally made me decide to make the film was, "The World of Wrestling," an article by Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies*. There's this wonderful phrase in it where he describes wrestling as being, 'a light without shadows'. Reading Barthes, I could imagine what he saw, that wrestlers play mythic characters: somebody plays Pride, somebody plays Courage. It is like Greek melodrama…so that interested me …the morality play aspect of it.

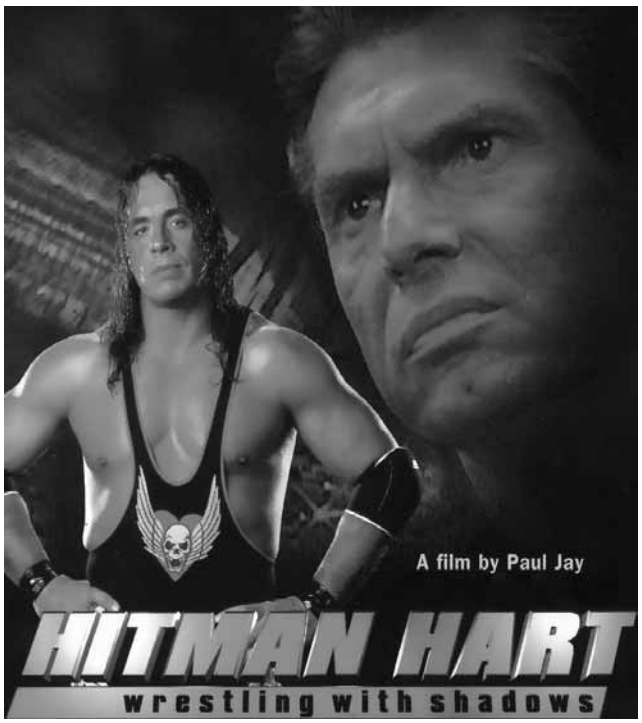
I was also intrigued by what's fake and what's real and the simplistic worldview that sees the world as a struggle between good and evil. But most of all, I wanted to understand how to make a film with a complex theme for a mass audience. I've always tried to make my films for millions of people, not just for art houses and intellectuals.

But it was hard to see where the story telling was taking us. I always edit in my head as I shoot, and this time, I didn't see how the story would end. I didn't want to do a "slice of life" film; I don't find that form interesting. And then, the gods of doc filmmaking smiled on us.

When we made the film, the code of the wrestlers not to expose professional wrestling was very much in force. Part of my deal to make the film was not to expose the code, under the condition that Bret would be able to say 'yea or nay' on this one point only: were we exposing professional wrestling? Our mission wasn't to expose professional wrestling, but nobody up until that time had the inside look we had, so I asked Bret early on, 'How do you want to deal with this?' and Bret said, 'Just film everything. And later if I have a problem, I trust you to deal with it.' So he gave us complete access. We radio mic'd him everywhere; we shot him everywhere. The guys that he was talking to didn't know he was radio mic'd all the time, so we were getting the inside scoop, assuming we wouldn't be able to use the stuff that gave away pro wrestling, which was not the point of the film. But when Vince McMahon [the owner of the WWF] betrayed Bret by fixing it so he'd "lose" the championship match in Montreal, Bret got so pissed off, he let us use everything.

POV: While you were making docs like *Hitman Hart*, you also found time to work on CBC Newsworld. What inspired you to

> "Even hidden in the most squalid Parisian halls, wrestling partakes of the nature of the great solar spectacles, Greek drama and bullfights: in both, a light without shadow generates an emotion without reserve."
>
> —Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957



Film poster (1998)

become the co-creator and co-producer of the debate shows *Face Off* (1994-98) and *counterSpin* (1998-2004)?

PJ: I always look for, or better to say, stumble upon, projects that interest me. I don't really try to imagine if the "viewer" will find it interesting. The NHL (National Hockey League) player strike [of fall, 1994; technically, a lockout—POV] was on and somebody from TSN (The Sports Network) interviewed John Ziegler [the NHL president who supported the owners during the dispute]. And Ziegler explained the owners' position and I said, 'Great, I'm with the owners.' Next day, the same guy interviewed Bob Goodenow from the players' association. And Goodenow defended the players and I said, 'I'm with the players.' He couldn't break through the argument of either of these guys because he didn't know enough. I needed to see Ziegler versus Goodenow go at it. I realized we didn't have a debate show in Canada. Because it's the same problem with politics: none of the interviewers are informed enough to really get at the argument.

I called legendary CBC producer Ron Haggart and said 'Do you want to do a debate show?' Together we pitched Michael Harris at CBC Newsworld and that's how *Face Off* got started. It ran [quite successfully] for four years—the Clair Hoy [as right winger] and Judy Rebick [as leftie] dynamic was quite fresh in its day. Then CBC thought it had run its course; it was time for something new. Burman [Tony Burman, head of Newsworld at the time] was willing to have a single host who was kind of a leftie. *Face Off* had opened up the space for lefties, thanks to Rebick and many of our guests.

POV: So that's when you started *counterSpin*. How did you decide on Avi Lewis as your host?

PJ: Avi Lewis had been doing very innovative stuff at Much Music. He's a great talent, one of the few that has a deeper take on stories and has the chops to make engaging television. We went after him at the same time as *The National* started pitching him. He decided to do our thing because he wanted to do something independent.

But for me personally, the thing about *Face Off* and *counterSpin* was that it was often frustrating on a creative level. I enjoyed the process of filmmaking more than the process of doing those shows… but it was amazing to be a part of the

daily news cycle, to see how we could affect the national discourse. It's very hard for a documentary to have such impact. It's the daily nature of the show that makes it so significant—it's part of the process of breaking news.

POV: Can you recall some of your more memorable episodes? It was such a dynamic show.

PJ: Well, we used to get 125,000 [viewers] a night between the two releases, 8 and 11 pm. When the Iraq War hit, we started doing 600,000 on Newsworld. We were beating *The National*. Same thing after 9/11. We did something that was dramatic. We weren't supposed to be starting the show until September 17th. We had spent the whole of August prepping our fall season. Our first couple of weeks were all worked out, and suddenly, 9/11 happened. I was in shock like everyone else, and my first reaction was, 'I hope it's not the Arabs.' It took me a day to recover. On Wednesday, I called CBC and said, 'Listen, we can't wait till next week to go on.' They said, 'What do you want to do?' I said, 'Put us on as soon as you can.' So they said, 'Well you can go on Friday.'

Meanwhile, Bush made the speech on the War on Terrorism. By the morning of our first show, *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post* and newspapers all across North America and the world, had run almost the same editorial. The editorial was: if you try to connect 9/11 to US foreign policy, if you try to do the 'root cause' debate, you're blaming the victims and capitulating to terrorism. That was the mood. Everyone was freaked the hell out.

Out of all our *counterSpin* episodes, I'm proudest of the one we did that night. I wrote the introduction, which started, 'If President Bush had gone on television and asked us to grieve, we wouldn't do the show tonight. But he asked us to go to war and we have a right to debate, 'Are we going to war or not?' And we did the root causes debate. We did the foreign policy debate. I'm told we were the first show in the English-speaking world on television that challenged the War on Terrorism.

Within a week, we invited the people that wrote the editorials at *The Globe* and *The National Post* that supported Bush's speech on the show. They came because they loved being on TV. So after saying no one should debate it [the root causes of 9/11], they came and they did it! And it opened things up. Within two weeks it was OK in Canada to debate root causes and US foreign policy.

POV: So the lesson is…?

PJ: Invite your opponents on your show!

I think we actually changed the discourse in Canada because our numbers went into hundreds of thousands during the next few weeks. And when you're reaching hundreds of thousands, it's not the same people every night, so your reach is about a million over the course of a few weeks. That's influential. I think we had something to do with the changing of the climate and what you could and couldn't talk about here.

POV: How did you get involved in *Return to Kandahar*, which sent you and Nelofer Pazira to Afghanistan?

PJ: Nelofer Pazira was the star of *Kandahar*. [Directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, the film was released soon after 9/11 and became an art house hit.] She came on *counterSpin* and afterwards I talked to her about the story. Nelofer [who moved to Canada when she was a teenager] was planning to do a documentary on the history of Kabul. As she told me the story [of *Kandahar*, where she's looking for a young woman], she told me that her friend was alive and living in Mazar-i-Sharif. I said, 'Are you kidding? That's the film. You've got to go look for Dyana.' I think it was hard for her, because it was so emotional; she had thought her friend was dead. I said, 'If you want I'll introduce you to really good producers and filmmakers.' I didn't want to make the film, I didn't want to do another documentary. I was planning to make a fictional film set in 2020. But the more I kept talking about the story, the more excited I became. Eventually I said to hell with it, I've got to do this. It was a chance to go to Afghanistan and try to understand that part of the world.

POV: What was the difference between your own assumptions of Afghanistan and being on the ground?

PJ: Before I went there, I did a pilot for another show, with me hosting, and two guests. Nelofer was one and General Lewis McKenzie was the other. And the show was about, 'Is collateral damage acceptable?' How do we get to this point, this mindset, where it's 'okay' to kill innocent civilians as long as your objective is military. I had this big argument…with Mackenzie on why they were bombing Kabul. I was really critical of this. Anyway, when I got to Kabul, while we were filming *Return to Kandahar,* I met many people who said, 'If bombing Kabul is what it took to get rid of the Taliban, so be it.' These were Afghans, people from Kabul…and our fixer said that he had met three families who had lost children in the bombing and they'd said, 'If it took my children's lives to get rid of the Taliban, it's a sacrifice we're willing to make.' They welcomed what it took to get rid of them. And that did NOT go along with my narrative before I left. It has to be put in context: the same people blamed US policy for the warlords and the Taliban coming to power in the first place. But people we met welcomed the overthrow of the Taliban, even if it meant the bombing of Kabul. When I was being interviewed about *Return to Kandahar*, I made a point of telling the story.

That's the kind of journalism I want to do…if the facts don't agree with my world view, I want to change my world view.

One of the great things General Lewis MacKenzie said in the interview, when I asked him why we were in Afghanistan, he said, 'We're only there for one reason: we want to keep the border open for our exports.' They didn't give a damn what the mission was. Canada was there to please the US. That's not to say there wasn't a good reason to be there…but the mission had to be about genuine reconstruction, massive investment in schools, hospitals and creating an economy. Not the American mission of chasing the Taliban around and paying lip service to reconstruction. That was the real story! And everybody who knew anything about Afghanistan knew that was the story, and *that* should have been on CBC news. We have soldiers killing and dying for a policy that makes no sense at all.

American TV news after 9/11 was something akin to *Pravda* in the Soviet Union. It became the official organ of White House policy. They helped sell an illegal war. We really saw the face of what a more full-blown American tyranny could look like. The role of television news in creating the conditions for this kind of totalitarianism is critical.

POV: Did stories like that motivate you to create The Real News Network?

PJ: Well, if you want to influence the public discourse, there's no substitute for daily news broadcasts. If you're there when the story breaks, and can repeat

and expand on it, that's how people form their outlook. We believe that at The Real News we can make a difference.

POV: If people are fed enough of another reality or another truth, will it really change the world? Will it lead to a different consciousness and to real social change?

PJ: I think the answer is yes, but not in "normal" times. There's somewhere between 20-30% of the population that has a fair idea of what's going on in the world. They're politicized enough, they're educated enough, they have access to enough information: they have a sense of things. But they're not in motion. They're not organized; they're very diffuse. If that 20-30% knew more, and were better armed as to how to explain things to other people, they could make a difference.

POV: Can The Real News truly affect the political discourse?

PJ: I think so. Our theory is we can build The Real News on the 20-30%, and then there are times when everyone gets politicized. In Canada there is a lot at stake in the upcoming federal election, and of course, we are very affected by the big stories south of the border. For Americans, in recent times, those have been the invasion of Iraq, Katrina, 9/11, the stealing of the 2000 US Election. There are times that are of such import that everybody's glued to their TV set and the Internet. Everybody wants to know: all of a sudden big issues that seemed abstract, get personal. So we need to be on TV and the Internet then. That's when we will start to have real influence.

We're building a news service that can provide a courageous, realistic take with depth and context. Then in those moments that get so politicized, when the 70% are flipping channels, they'll see that CNN, NBC, all the mainstream broadcasters—they're all saying the same thing. And they'll hit us, and it will be like, 'Wow! Did they just say that on TV? Or did they just say that on the Internet?'

We are doing news that gets off the official page, that questions underlying assumptions, that challenges the conventional wisdom.

Then we can start to make an impact into broader sections of the population. Because it's not that people don't want to know; it's just that daily life is tough, and it's hard to see how such big picture issues directly affect one's life.

POV: What are you calling yourself and The Real News?

PJ: Uncompromising journalism. We're creating a truly independent global news network that will be funded by its viewers. The Real News is going to offer news, debates and docs from around the world, all in English. Because the public, not corporations, will provide our funding, we'll be free to report news fairly and fearlessly.

POV: Are you going to be on TV as well as the Net?

PJ: The first thing we're producing is daily news for the Internet. We are finding our voice. We have to go deep and be good storytellers. In the end, it's all about the story telling. We want to create a 24/7 Internet news service on our web site, *YouTube*, and many other platforms throughout the web. We met with *YouTube* in San Francisco and we have a deal to be a daily content provider, which enhances our ability to reach hundreds of thousands of people.

Another relationship, which is really important, is the Google-iPhone deal. Google–Apple iPhones are going to have one button you can push to bring *YouTube* in. If we're on *YouTube*, we're going to be on iPhones. If they're promoting our content—and they say that they're going to work with us—then they can help create a flow for us from *YouTube* to iPhone.

Then, in time to cover the US presidential elections, we will roll out our one-hour television show in Canada and the US. Vision TV has offered to carry the show in Canada and we have agreements with various channels in the US that will get us into around 30 million houses on satellite and cable.

POV: So when do you want to have The Real News start?

PJ: It's all about the fundraising. The sooner we raise more money, the more our schedule advances. We're working hard to have a modest amount of daily content happening in September 2007. Over the summer we're solving technical problems, we're finding our voice. Everybody thinks the big challenge is money and of course it is, but in the end, the big challenge is, 'How do we take complicated concepts and make them accessible for most people?'

It's about the craft; it's the art of storytelling. It all comes back to, 'Can we tell a story about what's happening in Pakistan or Washington and get the real guts of it, the complexity of it, and make it interesting, entertaining, and feel relevant to people's lives?' It's very much about how it makes people feel, not just think. We also believe that solutions are news; we don't want to just overwhelm everyone with how awful things are.

If we get people into our storytelling—and get good at the storytelling—then people are going to watch every day for the next installment. After all the talk about the Internet and fundraising, it all comes down to, are we going to be good storytellers or not. If we're not, the rest isn't going to matter and if we are, it's all going to work.

POV: How are you accessing news feeds from other sources?

PJ: We made a deal with APTN (Associated Press Television Network), so we've got the whole AP video feed. We'll get stories as fast as CNN and CBC. Our reports will come from some of the leading print journalists in the world—people who do uncompromising, courageous work—and we will bring their stories in over the Internet, by web cam and with new streaming technology. We are going to be a reliable source of breaking world news. Then we'll add a layer of context and a layer of history. We're not sending Canadians or Americans everywhere; we're going to have the best local journalists giving their perspective on world stories. And covering the reality of North America is a big focus for us, with coverage of the US presidential elections being our first major push.

POV: How much money have you got now? How many people do you have working?

PJ: We have over 20 now, which is a crazy big payroll for this stage, but we have to build the capacity to make a serious impact with our coverage. Over the last three years we've raised about $4,750,000. We really need people who see the necessity for this project to step up now and help raise the funds to push the work to the next stage. I believe this is a critical project for the state of our democracy. We are heading into very dangerous times.

POV: Paul, you talked about the need for such a service, but the big question is why are you doing this? Why is The Real News worth doing for you?

PJ: When we were starting to put Real News together, there were two moments that made me think that I had to do this.

One was in Afghanistan. One day, we drove from Khandahar to Kabul and we stopped at this restaurant along the way. I talked to the truck drivers who were there. They asked me where I was from and I said, 'Guess.' And they said 'Germany,' because the Germans were building a school nearby. And I said, 'No, I'm from Canada. Do you know where that is?' And they said, 'Oh yes, it's next to Germany.' They'd never seen an atlas, they'd never seen a globe, they'd never seen a world map.

US/Western policy has contributed to creating areas of the world where the natural course of urbanization and modernization is derailed. Backward rural leaders were given money and guns to fight Western enemies. It's led to innocent people, without education, who have a practically medieval faith and understanding of the world—though, of course they do know how to use machine guns. These people are more easily manipulated and exploited by very dangerous political forces. And I'm not just talking about rural people in Afghanistan; you can see a somewhat parallel process is taking place even inside the US. People believe in fantasies and propaganda: they have faith, not knowledge based on facts.

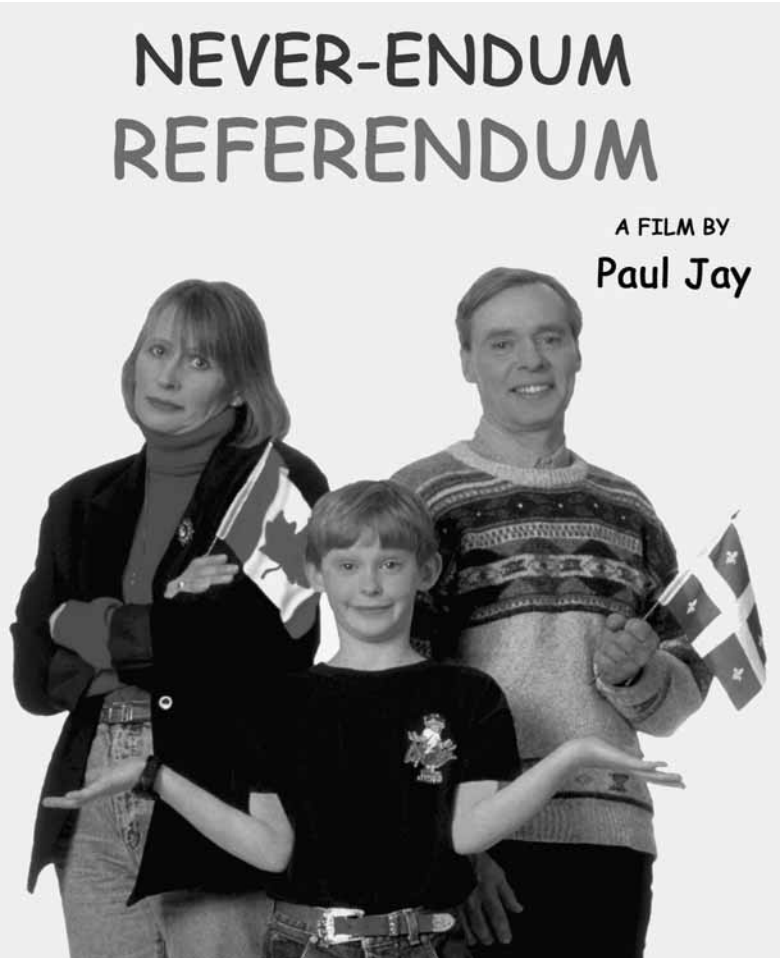
The second moment was when I was writing a script for a film that takes place in the year 2020. I had to imagine life as it might be then and it really was quite terrifying. From geo-politics to the climate change crisis, it started to feel like we are headed to a kind of 1939. I said to myself, 'I don't want to be in '39,' and wondered what could I have done in the 1920s. Witnessing this, knowing this, I couldn't go back to living life as usual. The Real News Network, for me personally, grew out of this experience.

We are living at a time not unlike that of Copernicus, Giordano Bruno and Galileo. We are fighting for the very idea that there is such a thing as a fact and there is an objective "real" world. I realize what makes me happy, is to be part of this fight.

When I talk about The Real News I often refer to a moment in the film, *The Matrix*.

POV: It's when Neo emerges from the illusory world of Plato's Cave into reality.

PJ: Yes, at The Real News, we want to pull out that plug on this whole false sense of the world. We want to pull it out and see the world for what it is. **POV**



Film poster (1997)

Paul Jay, making a "little bitty" sign.